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Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 1959

(Geneva) - The annual call to prayer for Christian unity during the week January 18 - 25 has been issued by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

The appeal for 1959 recalls that "the world is confronted by the unfortunate spectacle of the most widely held period of prayer for Christian unity being observed by groups with apparently contradictory purposes and aims", but asks for realistic recognition of this "tragic division" and declares that "if our prayer avoided or ignored the reality of our tragic condition it would not be true prayer".

Suggested forms of prayer for the seven days of the week are included in a leaflet sent out with this week's EPS. They will again be used in more than sixty countries by church bodies, local congregations, lay men and women, theological students and teachers, writers, speakers and broadcasters. United meetings for intercession and encounter between the confessions will be held in many local areas.

The call to prayer for 1959 and the text of the suggested daily intercessions may be ordered from World Council of Churches, 17 route de Malagnou, Geneva; British Council of Churches, 10 Eaton Gate, London S.W.1., or World Council of Churches, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N.Y. EPS, Geneva

Defeated US Congressman Hays Speaks on Church and Race

(Washington, D.C.) - A three-point plan for handling the racial problem in the Southern United States has been offered by defeated Congressman Brooks Hays of Arkansas. He is also president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

He was defeated in his stand for the House of Representatives by a segregationist candidate in a write-in campaign apparently organized by Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus and his supporters a week before the November 4 election.

Speaking in Washington late this month, Congressman Hays said that "first we should seek nonviolent solutions to all problems. Second, we should not seal the lips of our ministers and third, we should seek to do justice in individual situations."

"I am sure that all religious leaders in the South, as well as the North, deplore the violence that has occurred," he said.

When his Congressional term ends in January, Mr. Hays said that he would spend the last five months of his term of office as president of the Southern Baptist Convention filling numerous speaking engagements that have been offered. "I am going to speak in a number of Northern churches that have invited me and I am going to urge them not to put too much pressure on the South, not to use force. The only way to solve these problems is by mobilizing our own resources in the South to see that justice is done. We need time to do this, because it is difficult and those who seek to force us to move too fast only defeat the efforts being made on the local level."

Mr. Hays has been praised by church leaders for his stand on the racial issue, even though it meant his defeat after 16 years of service in the House of Representatives.

EPS, Geneva

Canadian Protestants and Catholics Discuss Colombia

(Toronto) - A statement on Colombia has been issued in Canada following joint meetings in 1957 and 1958 between representatives of the Canadian Council of Churches and the Canadian Catholic Conference.

In a broadcast this month, Dr. W.J. Gallagher, general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, said: "Political and religious aspects of the situation have been carefully examined and found difficult to separate. Our joint meeting, the report said, has made us look more objectively at the facts of the situation in Colombia. We must deplore the excesses of fanaticism, be they Roman Catholic or Protestant. At the same time, we assert unequivocally our claim that religious freedom must be established by right-thinking Christians of whatever persuasion. The Roman Catholic representatives realize the responsibility that rests on their Communion to instruct its priests and to exercise appropriate discipline. For our part, we must be discriminating in our judgment regarding sectarian activities, refusing to confuse unethical and unjustifiable aggressiveness with true missionary activity."

EPS, Geneva

West Indian Senator on Mission to Britain

(London) - Christians have a special role to play in helping coloured immigrants to become integrated into British life, according to West Indian Senator Allan G. Byfield, Minister Without Portfolio and leader of the West Indian Parliament.

A deacon of the Jonestown Baptist church in Kingston, Jamaica, Senator Byfield is on special mission to the United Kingdom to survey the growing racial problem there. "About 70 per cent of the coloured migrants to Britain are West Indians," he said and attributed much of the present tension to misunderstanding, reserve and shyness. Unintentional irritations were caused, he said, because the West Indians do not understand British customs or the British way of life and because British people are reserved and slow to welcome coloured immigrants.

In a special interview with the Baptist Times, Senator Byfield urged Christians to speak to West Indians, invite them to their churches, welcome them when they came and encourage them to become members. "It would be a mistake," he said, "to form separate churches for West Indians. They should be welcomed into the full membership and organizations of the churches in Britain."

EPS, Geneva

EACC Calls Conference on Christian Medical Work

(Nagpur) - An East Asia Conference on Christian Medical Work will be held in Hong Kong from December 28 to January 1, attended by delegates from fourteen Asian countries.

Under the theme, "The Christian in Medical Work in East Asia Today", delegates will discuss not only the Christian institutions in various countries but also the changes brought about by the development of the welfare state and the problems of Christians working for the state. Survey reports on the medical situation in various Asian countries also will be heard.

The consultation was suggested by the East Asia Christian Conference at its organizing conference in Prapat, Indonesia, in March 1957.

EPS, Geneva

Centre for Hungarians Opened in London

(London) - A social centre for Hungarian refugees in London was dedicated on November 20 by the Rev. Kenneth Slack, general secretary of the British Council of Churches, and formally opened by the director of the council's Department of Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service, Miss Janet Lacey.

Described as "the fulfilment of hopes cherished for the last ten years," the centre includes kitchens, lounge, recreational room and chapel and quarters for the resident chaplain. In opening the centre, Miss Lacey told the Hungarians present that, "you will find in this centre warmth and comfort and the freedom that comes to you because you can worship your God in your own language and keep alive your fellowship. All Hungarians, whether they are Christians or not, whether they are respectable or not, can always come here and find that fellowship."

EPS, Geneva

Swedish Churchmen Resist Women's Ordination

(Växjö, Sweden) - Clergy and laymen who have formed a new "confessional front" in the Church of Sweden in protest against the decision to ordain women have mapped plans for counteracting the Church's official stand.

Their spokesman, Dean G.A. Danell of Växjö, said that the dissenting group will urge people to stay within the church and to oppose ordinations.

"If we do not succeed", he added, "then there will be no other course than to establish a free church on the same basis as the Swedish national church".

According to the dean about fifty Lutheran pastors and laymen, at a meeting in the first week of November, agreed to work in the direction of leading the church back from its "false" position to "pure doctrine". (See also EPS No. 31)

EPS, Geneva

Christian Peace Conference Plans More Meetings

(Debreczen, Hungary) - A study meeting called by the continuation committee of the Prague Christian Peace Conference has decided to organize a further meeting in Czechoslovakia next spring to deal with a wide range of issues connected with war and peace.

Official invitations for the spring meeting will go to "all churches, church groups and Christian leaders who are interested in the movement". It is hoped in this way to spread the concern for Christian peacemaking and influence the whole Christian world.

Participants in the study meeting at Debreczen included Professor Joseph Hromadka of Prague, Archbishop Kiivit of Estonia, Professor Stephan Zankov, Orthodox, Bulgaria, Bishop Lajos Veto, Lutheran, Hungary and Professor A. Wantula of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Poland.

The Russian Orthodox Church was represented by Professor L.N. Parijskij.

Among the speakers was Professor Heinrich Vogel of Berlin, who spoke on "Christian Responsibility for the Future of Mankind in a Technological Age" and attacked arguments put forward by theologians to justify atomic weapons.

Dr. B. Pospisil, general secretary of the Prague Conference and director of the Ecumenical Institute of the Comenius Faculty in Prague, reviewed the development and prospects of the "Prague movement".

The Debreczen meeting sent a telegram to government representatives meeting in Geneva to discuss cessation of atomic testing, urging them to "free our world forever from the terrible menace of atomic tests".

EPS, Geneva

East German Teachers Flee to West

(Berlin) - During the first eight months of this year, 2,171 teachers and 22 college lecturers fled to Western Germany from the German Democratic Republic.

Cited as one of the main reasons, reports say, is the increasing pressure being exerted on teachers in Eastern Germany by the Communist Party. Press and official pronouncements constantly emphasize that education must be directed toward scientific atheism and that there can be no compromise between Marxism and religion.

A current slogan in East Germany, according to reports, says that teachers must be "either Marxists or churchgoers".

Recently a newspaper published in Cottbus objected to the idea that church membership is a personal matter.

To help in the struggle with "unprogressive or uncooperative tendencies in the sphere of religion" the German teachers' paper lists an anthology of writings by Marx and Lenin called "Secrets of Religion". The paper comments: "In every

branch of education there are many opportunities to overcome obsolete religious conception, to trace their origin and to show the pupils that they are due to class distinctions".

Reports also say that a campaign is under way to influence pupils and adds that more and more students also are leaving Eastern Germany. EPS, Geneva

WCC Delegation to Cyprus

(Geneva) - In a statement on the plan to send a World Council of Churches delegation to Cyprus, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, WCC general secretary, said, "In connection with press reports concerning the sending of a World Council of Churches delegation to Cyprus the General Secretariat of the World Council states that in line with previous World Council action in this matter and also in the light of a letter received from the Archbishop of Athens (not, as has been erroneously stated in press reports, from Archbishop Makarios) the Central Committee meeting at Nyborg in August decided to send a fraternal delegation to Cyprus to visit the authorities of the Church of Cyprus. The composition of the delegation and the time of their visit will be announced when the arrangements have been completed." EPS, Geneva

Another East German Church Revises Confirmation Rite

(Berlin) - New regulations for confirmation have been adopted by the Church of Thuringia. The rules, similar to those recently devised in Saxony and Anhalt, are meant to cope with problems arising from widespread use of the Communist-sponsored Youth Dedication and will be in force in 1959.

The synod of the Thuringian Church describes the measures as giving "evidence of the special difficulties in which the Church is placed through outside interference and the consequent confusion of people's minds and consciences".

The main point of the new practice is to emphasize that participation in Holy Communion is central in confirmation.

The Thuringian regulations provide for candidates to have special preparation for Holy Communion in conjunction with normal religious instruction for confirmation as previously administered. The preparation period will culminate in a communion service on Trinity Sunday, 1959, for all confirmation candidates who "sincerely desire to receive the sacrament".

After consultation with parish councils pastors may decide to omit the parts of the service concerned with confirmation as such, but participation in the communion will be regarded as confirmation for those taking part.

Where it is decided not to admit a candidate the purpose will be make it clear that confirmation cannot be given to a child who "speaks insultingly about the Church's teaching or openly expresses contempt of the gift of communion". Confirmation may also be withheld when the pastor wants to make it clear that "by participating in the Youth Dedication a child wishes to deny the Christian faith".

One result of tightening up communion instruction and withdrawing "automatic" confirmation privileges for all applicants is expected to be stronger groups of younger church members. (See also EPS No. 35) EPS, Geneva

Dr. Cavert Calls for Local Unity

(Chicago) - Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert, former executive secretary of the World Council of Churches in the USA, has declared that "the next stage on the road is to domesticate the ecumenical movement in the local community".

Dr. Cavert, who was delivering the William Henry Hoover Lectures at the Disciples' Divinity House of the University of Chicago, said "progress will not take place through what is done at some 'summit conference' of the National Council or the World Council; or even in offices of denominational boards," he told his hearers, "but in what happens in the towns and villages and cities where Christian people live. The front line of advance is where witnessing and worshipping congregations of different traditions exist side by side. Until they see the ecumenical movement in terms of the difference it makes in all their own attitudes, programmes and relationships, it will have an inevitable aspect of unreality."

In the course of the lectures Dr. Cavert also charged many local churches in the United States with thinking of themselves as "entirely ministering to the conscious needs and interests of their own members". He said that the local church "is not stirring its members to face an explosive racial situation with the mind of Christ. It is not opening their eyes to the imminent prospect of the destruction of our whole civilization in a nuclear holocaust," he went on. "It is raising no disturbing question as to what Christian stewardship means for the relation of the richest nation in the world to economically underdeveloped people. It is not making its members sensitive to the sub-Christian level of much of our economic and industrial life. To put it bluntly, many a local church is giving its members only what they want."

EPS, Geneva

German Churches Preach Against Anti-Semitism

(Bielefeld) - Sermons condemning anti-semitism were preached in hundreds of Protestant and Roman Catholic churches all over Germany on the twentieth anniversary of the National Socialists' fiercest anti-Jewish pogrom in 1938.

Dr. Ernst Wilm, president of the Church of Westphalia, speaking at Bielefeld, said he was angry and sad that so many Germans refused to acknowledge the injustice done. He said that in their pride and self-righteousness they denied the judgment of God in the fact that thousands of buildings had subsequently been destroyed for every single building burned and millions of German lives lost for the millions of Jews put to death in the persecutions.

Superintendent George Traar, speaking on behalf of the Lutheran Church in Austria, also took part in a national broadcast called "A Reminder and a Warning". He said that Protestants had been implicated in the burning of many Jewish synagogues in Vienna twenty years ago and that hundreds of thousands of Jews had suffered "hateful persecution" at the hands of their fellow-citizens.

EPS, Geneva

In Brief

A new Patriarch of Antioch for the Greek Orthodox Church has been elected in Damascus - the Archbishop of Tripoli, Theodosius Abourghely. The dioceses in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq are within his jurisdiction, together with the Syrian Greek Orthodox community in North and South America.

A resolution urging President Eisenhower to call a national conference on racial integration as soon as possible was passed by delegates from 220 councils of United Church Women meeting in Denver, Colorado. In other action, the women went on record as supporting civil rights and integration legislation, proposed "more effective enforcement of civil rights legislation by the executive branch of the government" and asked for controlled nuclear weapons testing.

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This autumn the Waldensian Church in Uruguay celebrated the centenary of the arrival of the first Protestants from Italy. The jubilee celebrations included the laying of the foundation-stone of the Casa Valdese in Montevideo, which is planned as a Protestant centre. The Waldensian Church of Italy was represented by its moderator, Pastor Ermanno Rostan.

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A certain improvement in relations between the churches in Eastern Germany and the government was noted in a recent conference which met in Berlin under the leadership of Bishop Otto Dibelius. The conference expressed the hope that negotiations between representatives of church and state would remove other difficulties.

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The Hungarian government has approved the election of Zoltan Kaldy, 39, as the new bishop of the Southern Diocese of the Lutheran Church and his official induction took place on November 2. He succeeds Bishop Lajos Ordass, who was forced to resign by the government.

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A consultation on "The Christian Task of the YWCA" has been held at Glion, Switzerland. Led by Mrs. Harrison Elliott, former YWCA general secretary in the USA, it was attended by 33 volunteers and staff from 21 countries. The Executive Committee of the World YWCA, which met afterwards, made plans for the four-yearly meeting in Mexico of the YWCA's World Council, September 23, 1960, to October 3, 1959.

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In connection with the celebration of its 100th anniversary next year, the Finnish Missionary Society plans to open missionary work in an Islamic country. The field will be determined after consultation with the Lutheran World Federation, International Missionary Council and Swedish and Danish missionary societies.

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An agreement has been concluded to enable intercommunion between the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren and the Moravian Church in Czechoslovakia. Members of each church may from now on receive the Lord's Supper administered in the other.

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Patriarch German of the Serbian Orthodox Church has emphasized the need for unity among churches because "only spiritually united shall we give a real answer to the tasks given us by our position of high service". The message was sent to the Council on Christian Unity of the International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Indianapolis in response to greetings the agency had sent to the Patriarch when he was named supreme leader of the Serbian Church.

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In response to an invitation extended by Pastor Gyula Muraközy, general secretary of the Foreign Office of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Pastor Pierre Bourguet and Pastor Paul Conord, president and general secretary of the French Reformed Church, visited the Hungarian Reformed Church from November 15 - 24.

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The Roman Catholic Bishop of Essen, Germany, has conferred with President Ernst Wilm of the Church of Westphalia to discuss extension of the "Interconfessional Social Organization" founded in 1950 on the initiative of the bishop and of Klaus von Bismarck, head of the Westphalian Evangelical Church's social work. So far, inter-confessional discussion groups have been attended by more than 15,000 men and women from the mining and textile industries. Further efforts in the iron ore industry are planned.

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The Metropolitan James of Melita, representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople at the headquarters of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, is representing the patriarchate at the celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of the autonomy of the Orthodox Church in Finland, November 24.- December 1.

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Ten conferences on Christian unity issues will be held during the next six months in colleges and seminaries in the United States and Canada. They are being sponsored by the Council of Christian Unity of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) and the divisions of World Mission and Home Mission of the United Christian Missionary Society. The purpose of the conferences will be to consider the Disciples' position in the ecumenical movement.

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Archbishop Sion Manoogian, South American Primate of the Armenian Apostolic (Orthodox) Church has been elected primate of the Church's North American Diocese for a four-year term. The church, which has over 100,000 members, is under the jurisdiction of the Catholicate of Etchmiadzin in Armenia.

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The Rev. C. Denis Ryan, secretary and immediate past president of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, has died during a visit to the New Zealand churches. As general secretary and president of the Australian Council for the World Council of Churches, he had taken a leading part in the development of the ecumenical movement in Australia and was a delegate of his church to the Evanston Assembly of the WCC in 1954. He was fifty-nine.

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Bishop Hans Lilje of Hanover, Germany, has cancelled his engagement as Harry Emerson Fosdick Visiting Professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York, originally planned for January-June 1958. His inability to lecture was reported to be due to pressure of work following the death in a road accident last September of Bishop Volkmar Herntrich of Hamburg. (See EPS No.

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The committee established in Berne, Switzerland, to work for erection of an international Protestant radio transmitter in that country (see EPS No. 13/14) is issuing a news bulletin in English, French, German and Italian. Requests have already been filed for programme space involving twenty different programmes in fifteen European languages. Applicants include the "Lutheran Hour" office in St. Louis, Missouri, USA. The Swiss Protestant Federation has not yet decided whether to support the project, which aims to beam broadcasts to all of Europe and beyond.

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"Bible Sunday" will again be observed in churches in many parts of the English-speaking world on December 7, the second Sunday in Advent, when the Anglican Book of Common Prayer uses a collect referring to the use of the scriptures. The Bible Societies promote the observance.

EPS, Geneva